

Future Vision

While the City of Gary has numerous challenges regarding land use, economic development, and physical conditions, it has tremendous assets or “building blocks” for the 21st century. The future vision of a sustainable, green Gary with significant new economic development initiatives is based on the community’s desire for major change. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to improve the City’s quality of life by taking full advantage of Gary’s positive attributes and by guiding development in a more effective manner.

Sustainability & Design

In the future, the City will strive to make sustainable land use choices as it implements the Comprehensive Plan. Improving the community’s physical conditions and conserving natural resources will be major considerations when evaluating community improvement and private development proposals.

Gary will promote itself as a quality residential community with attractive open spaces, roadways, gateways, and architecture. The City will foster awareness among landowners, business owners, and developers of higher quality buildings, sites, and public space design, along with sustainable development principles that emphasize energy conservation, healthy buildings, and resource reuse and recovery.

Economic Development

Gary will promote itself as a quality national and international location for business. New retail districts/centers and business/industrial parks, along with continued Lakefront development, Airport expansion, and U.S Steel operations will help fuel the economy, bring more jobs to the area, and provide more opportunities for Gary residents to work and shop within their own community. The increase in job opportunities will also bring a rise in residential growth.

Route 912 & Interstate 90/65 Business Parks

Scattered and obsolete industrial and office uses will be consolidated throughout the City, and concentrated into two major industrial locations that will be “re-established” as business/industrial parks. These highly visible locations will be significantly improved, branded, and marketed as attractive and modern business park settings with direct proximity and access to the Airport, interstate expressways, and railroads.

Enhanced Commercial Districts/Centers

Consolidated commercial districts will be attractive, well defined, and linked to adjacent neighborhoods. Commercial districts will be developed in highly visible areas throughout the City with strong links to housing and transportation. Commercial districts will be compact so as to be vital and well-occupied, and readily served by multiple modes of transportation.

New Neighborhoods

Gary will be a strong residential community with safe, attractive neighborhoods and quality schools and parks. New housing developments will provide a wide range of products to current and future residents. Quality multi-family housing will be developed near commercial districts/centers, schools, parks, greenways, and transit service.

The City's new sustainable development approach will change areas suffering from disinvestment and neglect into active neighborhoods surrounded by urban green belts. This new approach would involve relocation of residents from predominately vacant blocks to new infill housing on solid blocks with few vacancies. The open blocks would then be converted into a wide variety of green spaces.

Efficient Transportation Network

Gary's extensive multi-modal transportation network will continue to provide for efficient and safe movement of vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the region. Continued improvement of the conditions and function of Gary/Chicago Airport, regional and local roads, and transit service will facilitate travel for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Urban Eco-System

Capitalizing on the City's urban eco-system, Gary will have a unique, nationally recognized open-space network that extends throughout the City and its business parks and neighborhoods. This interconnected open space will include preserved natural areas and wildlife habitats, river corridors, an expanded lakeshore and beaches, new and expanded parks, greenways, pedestrian and bicycle paths, cultural trails, fitness trails, scenic overlooks, fishing piers, school campuses, community flower and vegetable gardens, public art, sports fields, playgrounds, nature centers, and outdoor classrooms. The network will serve local residents as well as become a draw for visitors from throughout the Midwest. Elementary, junior high, and high school students will be able to engage with the environment near their schools and neighborhoods.

Public Facilities

Public facilities will continually be improved and maintained to provide residents with outstanding municipal services. Public safety, parks and recreation, schools, infrastructure, and other community facilities and services will be provided in an efficient and effective manner to Gary citizens and businesses to maintain a high quality of life and to sustain the region's economy.

Goals & Objectives

Community Context

Goal: An attractive and distinct community with thriving business districts and residential neighborhoods that serve the needs of City residents while preserving Gary's historic heritage.

Objectives:

- Improve land use patterns and physical conditions.
- Be recognized as a desirable place to live, shop, and conduct business.
- Promote developments that are compatible with surrounding uses.
- Preserve historic and cultural resources where feasible.

Strategies:

- Market the Comprehensive Plan to let developers, builders, landowners, business owners, and potential residents know that the City has a clear vision for the community's future development.
- Amend zoning districts to match the Comprehensive Plan.
- Work with state, regional, and county planning agencies to implement transportation and open space improvements, and historic preservation initiatives.

Residential Land Use

Goal: Safe, attractive residential neighborhoods with a variety of housing types that enhance the overall character of the City.

Objectives:

- Acknowledge and preserve the City's established thriving neighborhoods.
- Change the physical conditions of those blocks suffering from disinvestments.
- Provide affordable housing for low-income and senior households.
- Foster new housing developments that are both mixed-income and mixed-product to reduce large concentrations of low-income households.

Strategies:

- Evaluate and enforce building codes.
- Provide grants, loans, and/or technical assistance to homeowners to assist with property maintenance.
- Provide comprehensive sidewalk, street, curb, street lighting, tree trimming, and landscape improvements and encourage homeowner repairs.
- Consolidate underdeveloped, blighted blocks for open space and encourage development of vacant lots in solid blocks by assembling properties and removing deteriorated structures.
- Encourage high quality site planning that creates interconnected, pedestrian oriented neighborhoods centered on open space, parks, and schools.
- Encourage new rental housing catering to a range of income groups including young casino and other workers, particularly in the downtown area.

SECTION 12: GARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

- Create master plans for redeveloping neighborhoods with significant vacancies and deteriorated structures, assemble properties to consolidate underdeveloped, blighted blocks, and proactively recruit developers to implement new residential development according to the plans.

Commercial Land Use

Goal: Attractive, viable commercial districts/centers that serve local and regional residents.

Objectives:

- Consolidate, concentrate, and focus commercial development into strategic locations.
- Promote development/redevelopment of vacant and underutilized commercial properties at strategic locations.
- Establish well-maintained, attractive, pedestrian-friendly commercial districts and centers.

Strategies:

- Revise the Zoning Ordinance to accommodate modern commercial development standards, including mixed-use developments.
- Assemble or identify sites and undertake provision of proper access to provide attractive locations for such major retailers as grocery stores and general merchandise discount department stores.
- Work with developers to encourage high-quality, commercial and mixed-use development in key locations.
- Work with property/business owners to upgrade buildings, signage, and parking lot landscaping.
- Work with property/business owners to relocate businesses from inefficient commercial locations.
- Ensure adequate parking, including shared parking throughout each commercial district.
- Enhance streetscape and signage in viable commercial locations.

Office/Industrial Land Use

Goal: Viable industrial districts that accommodate a range of businesses and provide economic benefits to the City.

Objectives:

- Establish a thriving business environment that provides employment opportunities.
- Establish Route 912 and Interstate 90/65 industrial areas as modern business parks that can accommodate a wide range of industrial, service, and office uses.
- Facilitate a sustainable approach to doing business in Gary that reduces operational costs, enhances the environment, and contributes to a positive image of the City.
- Minimize impacts of industrial uses on adjacent land uses.
- Enhance buildings, parking and service areas, signage, and landscaping on viable business properties throughout the City.

SECTION 12: GARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Strategies:

- Capitalize on the City's extensive transportation network and regional location.
- Revise the Zoning Ordinance to accommodate modern business park standards, keep heavy industrial uses away from residential and commercial districts, and require screening and buffering between industrial and other uses.
- Undertake pro-active efforts to establish modern business parks including site assembly, infrastructure development, and developer recruitment.

Open Space

Goal: An extensive and interconnected system of open space that builds on the Gary Green Links Plan, accommodates a wide variety of activities, and enhances the overall City.

Objectives:

- Preserve and enhance existing open spaces.
- Change land use in strategic locations to add significant new acreage to the overall system.
- Maintain and expand parks and school campuses to offer a range of recreation facilities.
- Create a network of paths that link existing and new open spaces and improve citywide accessibility.

Strategies:

- Identify organizations and resources available for open space preservation and enhancement.
- Identify the ownership of properties delineated for open space in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Prioritize key sites, acquire vacant or underutilized land, and program appropriate open space use.
- Prepare design documents for priority sites that address mitigation, preservation, access, landscaping, and signage.
- Develop a comprehensive park maintenance program with trained staff.

Transportation

Goal: An efficient transportation system that provides for the safe movement of vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Objectives:

- Implement the Airport Master Plan, including runway, road, and rail line realignments.
- Facilitate access throughout the City, especially to the Lakefront, Downtown and business parks.
- Change the function and character of 4th and 5th Avenues within Downtown and neighborhoods.
- Plan transit oriented mixed-use developments around the Downtown Metro South Shore Station and Miller Station.

Strategies:

- Continue to identify and pursue funding sources for transportation improvements.
- Reduce truck traffic through Downtown and residential neighborhoods, especially along 4th and 5th Avenues.
- Change 4th and 5th Avenues to two-way traffic and design parking and streetscape enhancements.
- Improve wayfinding/directional signage throughout the City to orient visitors to key locations.
- Establish internal loop roads within the Route 912 and Interstate 90/65 business parks.
- Enhance the transit service and development potential of the Miller train station area through potential realignment of Route 12 and Route 20.

Community Facilities

Goal: Efficient community facilities that provide residents, business owners, and property owners with a full range of services.

Objectives:

- Efficiently distribute community facilities throughout the City based on current and projected residential and business needs.
- Upgrade and maintain Gary Schools as attractive educational assets for residents and businesses.

Strategies:

- Maintain sidewalks, alleys, streets, street lighting, and landscaping.
- Engage Gary businesses and institutions in evaluating, planning, and programming public facilities and services.

Community Character

Goal: An attractive community with a distinct visual identity that promotes Gary's natural and physical setting.

Objectives:

- Create and promote an identity for Gary that capitalizes on its Lakefront industrial setting and unique urban eco-system.
- Encourage higher quality site, landscape/streetscape, signage, and building design to enhance the City's physical conditions and "internal" image.
- Establish an attractive "external" image for Gary by cleaning and landscaping gateway intersections and expressway frontages.
- Encourage higher quality design for new housing and commercial uses to create architectural interest and variety in each block and neighborhood.
- Instill "Pride of Place" with business and property owners regarding property improvements and maintenance.

Strategies:

- Revise ordinances and create design standards for existing property maintenance and new development, including building design, landscaping, fencing, and signage.

SECTION 12: GARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

- Enhance community wayfinding and identity by establishing a coordinated signage system, and distinct landscaped gateways at main City entrances.
- Organize a building improvement program for commercial and industrial areas.
- Consider an “industrial theme” and “green business” approach when developing a Gary “brand” and signage/streetscape designs to embrace the City’s history as an industrial powerhouse.
- Consider incorporating public art as part of a City brand or design theme.
- Consider creating an awards/recognition program to highlight high-quality developments and property improvement projects.
- Work with property owners to enhance the physical conditions of existing properties.
- Consider the feasibility of establishing spring and fall “clean-up campaigns” involving City crews, civic and business groups, business owners, and property owners.

Future Land Use

The Future Land Use Plan for Gary is based on community goals, economic development opportunities, and the City assets. It defines the type, location, and mix of land uses desired by the City. The Plan accommodates the development projected in Section 9: Land Use and Market for future industrial, commercial, and residential development.

- Figure 12.1: Overall Land Use Strategy presents the broader land use changes projected for the City. Figure 12.2: Future Land Use Plan presents recommended land uses for each block. The City’s Staff, Plan Commission, and Council will review public improvement and private development initiatives for consistency with the Future Land Use Plan and its goals, objectives, and strategies.

Residential

The Future Land Use Plan provides a framework for creating consolidated residential neighborhoods. Currently, the City’s residential neighborhoods are primarily single-family homes with varying physical conditions. Neighborhoods like Miller, Aetna, and Marshalltown are viable neighborhoods with very few vacant properties. Other neighborhoods like Black Oak have deteriorating infrastructure and blocks that are mostly vacant.

Because the short-term housing demand in Gary will not likely meet the current supply of vacant residential properties, infill development should be concentrated in areas and on blocks with active housing where a critical mass can be achieved. The Illustrative Sub-Area Plans presented in Section 13, conceptually identify residential blocks and neighborhoods with a strong urban framework and recommends that these areas be targeted for infill residential development. The Plans recommend that areas with poor physical conditions and a large number of vacant lots be reverted to park or open space. More specific strategies for consolidating residential neighborhoods are discussed in Section 14: Implementation.

Commercial

Existing commercial uses have been developed sporadically and are spread inefficiently throughout the City. Commercial uses should be consolidated and strengthened in areas with increased residential densities and visitor/commuter traffic to maximize commercial activity.

Streetscape and landscape improvements will help strengthen the physical appearance and significantly enhance these shopping environments. Obsolete commercial uses located outside of these districts/centers provide opportunities for residential redevelopment or open space expansion. More specific strategies for consolidating commercial districts are discussed in Section 14: Implementation.

The Illustrative Sub-Area Plans identify the type of development that is appropriate for the City's key commercial districts based on physical character, surrounding land uses, and transportation access. Commercial development within Downtown should emphasize the Downtown as a civic center, central business district, and an entertainment district.

Near the Downtown and Miller Train stations, commercial uses should be transit-oriented, providing a variety of everyday goods and services for area residents and commuters. Automobile oriented commercial development should be concentrated near interchanges to capture the larger regional consumer market. The Commercial District along Broadway Avenue through University Park should be a university-oriented "Main Street" providing a variety of commercial uses for local residents and students.

Industrial

Gary has an abundance of industrial properties. However, poor access and physical conditions limit the ability to attract new businesses that can provide an economic benefit to the City. Industrial uses should be consolidated into well-defined, modern business parks, taking advantage of access to railroads as well as the City's interstate expressways

New business parks should be created along Route 912 and along 15th Avenue near I-90/I-65 to accommodate a range of business sizes and types. Additionally, light industrial/service parks should be created along the Industrial Highway near the Gary Airport expansion, along the Route 12/20 in the eastern part of the City, and along Grant Street north of Ridge Road to serve local service and auto needs in landscaped campus settings.

There are industrial uses inappropriately located within residential neighborhoods. The Future Land Use Plan recommends that these properties be relocated or cleared and converted to housing or open space.

Open Space

Gary's Lakefront and natural resources present unique open space and recreation opportunities. According to National Recreation and Park Association standards, Gary is currently deficient in the amount of park acreage it should have per every 1,000 residents of the City. However, the abundance of undeveloped and underutilized land allows for possible park expansions and implementation of the City's Green Link plan.

SECTION 12: GARY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Future Land Use plan recommends a large expansion of the National Dunes Lakeshore Park to include industrial property west of Lake Street. Additional Lakefront recreational initiatives include a large lakefront park as part of a mixed-use redevelopment north of the Gary-Chicago International Airport.

The area south of Interstate 80/94 and along the Calumet River contains extensive wetlands and is generally unsuitable for development. The plan recommends that this large area be preserved as open space, and that the few existing residents and businesses are relocated to other areas that are targeted for infill and redevelopment.

The Gary Green Link plan envisions an interconnected trail system that provides connections to parks and open space throughout the City. The Future Land Use plan takes the Green Link plan one step further by identifying additional parcels and blocks that are suitable for new parks, expanding existing parks, and creating greenways and trails. Open spaces with dune and swale eco-systems present an opportunity for creating a unique opportunity for outdoor learning centers.



